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ABSTRACT

Intended for individuals preparing for careers as information professionals, this fact sheet provides background information and discusses programs, areas of job opportunities, and specific positions. The information professional is described as competent in a subject area as well as in information collection and dissemination techniques; the profession itself is noted as service oriented. Four basic areas in the information profession are listed: operations, management, design, and research. The document notes that such positions are found in both public and private sectors. A list of relevant reading materials, and organizations and colleges to contact for further information is provided. (KC)

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CAREERS FOR INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS
AN ERIC FACT SHEET

JAN 83

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ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources
Syracuse, N.Y.

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CAREERS FOR INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS

-- An ERIC Fact Sheet --

This fact sheet is intended to be useful to individuals who are preparing for careers as information professionals, or who may be interested in changing positions within the information profession.

We are in the midst of an "information explosion." As a result, many exciting career opportunities are opening up in the relatively new information profession. More information has been printed in the past decade than in all previous history (Spivak, et al., 1982) and it is expected that published materials on virtually every subject will double in ten years (Kaminecki, 1981). How to handle the increase in information and the advances in the technology to make the information available to more people are the challenges of the information profession.

WHO ARE THE INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS?

Information professionals are interested in how information is handled and transferred. They are concerned with the manner in which people create, collect, organize, label, store, find, analyze, send, receive, and use information for any purpose. The information professional's role is to facilitate all these functions so that users may fill their special information needs. An information professional should have an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary background. In most cases the information professional is competent in a subject field as well as in the area of information collection and dissemination techniques. The information professional uses logic, mathematics, languages, communication skills, psychology, behavioral sciences, computer science, library science, business administration, and data processing. This person applies innovative and experimental technology to solve problems encountered in libraries, media centers, data centers, information systems, and other environments where information and its uses are pivotal to human pursuits. As service oriented professionals, individuals who work as information specialists are enthusiastic in their efforts to help others satisfy their information needs. Whatever subject is of interest to students, teachers, researchers, other professionals, and practitioners, as well as the general public, in their vocational and avocational interests is within the scope of the information professional's job.

WHERE CAN YOU FIND PROGRAMS TO PREPARE INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS?

In the past twenty years many university programs have been developed to prepare information professionals. Academic instruction is offered by graduate schools of library and information science, schools of business administration, and schools of computer science. Many graduate programs have changed their names to reflect the growing interest in information specialities. Any student selecting a program must be aware that programs may differ in general orientation, in subject specialization, and in their emphasis on the use of technology, as well as the level of sophistication in their approach to technology. For the established professional considering a career change or interested in updating skills and competencies in this fast-paced field, an increasing number of continuing education seminars, workshops, and classes are becoming available at professional conferences and meetings. A list of universities and professional organizations and associations is provided at the end of this fact sheet for your information.

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR AREAS OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE INFORMATION PROFESSIONAL?

Positions in information specialities are varied. Positions may be as basic as the simple interaction with a computer and database queries or as complex as the management of an entire information system.

There are four basic areas in the information field: (a) operations, (b) management, (c) design, and (d) research and teaching. Examples of operations positions include indexer/abstractor, bibliographic searcher, online search specialist, librarian, media specialist, and information broker. Positions available in management include supervisor of information systems, administrator of information centers, consultants on information problems, and coordinators of all organizational matters and personnel. Those interested in design may find employment as systems programmers, systems engineers, library system analysts, lexicographers, automated systems designers, and other similar endeavors. Positions in research and teaching are located in research centers, universities, and educational laboratories. It is an interesting phenomenon that many professionals are working in their chosen areas and do not recognize the fact that they are involved in the unique career of the information professional due to the fact that they are employed in areas where information management and needs are not a prime concern.

WHAT ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR POSITIONS AS AN INFORMATION PROFESSIONAL?

Information problems and needs are not restricted to any particular geographic region. Positions are to be found in every nation of the world and in the public and the private sectors. Libraries and academic institutions may immediately come to mind, but services offered by the information professional are needed by local, state, federal, and international governmental offices, business and industry, banking and investment firms, medical centers, health care facilities, hospitals, the military, and book, magazine, and newspaper publishers. Trade and professional associations, non-profit organizations such as research institutes, foundations, and socially oriented programs are also looking for people with information handling skills.

ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY 13210

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Debons, Anthony and others. The Information Professional. New York: Marcel Dekker, 1981.
Based on "Manpower Requirements for Scientific and Technical Communications: An Occupational Survey of the Information Profession." The United States is changing from an industrial to a predominantly service and information economy. This report is a landmark investigation of the dramatic expansion of the information sector of the U.S. economy.

Delzell, Robert F. Finding a Position: Strategies for Library School Graduates. Occasional Paper #153, April 1982. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, 1982.
Covers four areas: (1) how to look for a job, (2) what is expected from your employer, (3) what your employer expects from you, and (4) projections for the future for jobs and salaries.

"Guide to Library Placement Services." Bowker Annual of Library and Book Trade Information. New York: R.R. Bowker, 1982.
Covers general sources of job information, specialized library associations, information on federal jobs, overseas employment, and employment in non-library settings.

The Job Finder: The Data Processing/Information Technology. What the Jobs Are, What They Pay and How to Get Them. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1981.
Provides information on industries for job seekers. A guide to opportunities in the information field.

Kaminecki, Sharon P. Super Careers in Information Science. Washington, DC: American Society for Information Science, 1981.
A brief, lively brochure describing the information professional and job opportunities.

Occupation and Outlook Handbook. (83rd ed.) Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, 1982.
Describes what people do in a job. Gives current, accurate, and comprehensive career information for those just out of school as well as those contemplating a career change or re-entering the work force. Revised every two years, it covers 250 occupations and information is based on a variety of sources, e.g., business firms, trade associations, professional societies, educational institutions, and governmental agencies.

Spivak, Jane F., and others. Careers in Information. White Plains, NY: Knowledge Industry Publications, Inc., 1982.
Reviews the current job situation for the information industry and information professionals and provides projections for jobs in the future. More information has been printed in the past ten years than in all previous history. The information explosion is not about to stop, and America's future is in the development of technology to handle and service the information needs of the world.

INDIVIDUALS NEEDING ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CAN ADDRESS SPECIFIC QUESTIONS TO:

American Library Association
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611

American Society for Information Science
1010 16th Street NW
Washington, DC 20036

Association for Computing Machinery
11 West 42nd Street
New York, NY 10036

Association for Educational Communications and Technology
1126 16th Street NW
Washington, DC 20036

Association for Educational Data Systems
1201 16th Street NW
Washington, DC 20036

Special Libraries Association
235 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10003

The American Library Association provides a free list of accredited graduate library school programs, updated semi-annually. Other academic programs with valuable elements for the preparation of information professionals include:

American University: Center for
Technology and Administration
Massachusetts and Nebraska Avenues NW
Washington, DC 20016

Cornell University
Department of Computer Science
Ithaca, NY 14850

Georgia Institute of Technology
School of Information and Computing Science
Atlanta, GA 30332

Harvard University
Information Sciences Program
Cambridge, MA 02138

Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Sloan School of Management
77 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

Michigan State University
College of Communications
East Lansing, MI 48823

Ohio State University
Department of Computer Science
190 North Oval Drive
Columbus, OH 43210

Purdue University
School of Industrial Engineering
Lafayette, IN 47907

University of Southern California
Annenberg School of Communications
University Park, Los Angeles, CA 90007

Stanford University
Institute for Communication Research
Stanford, CA 94305

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